THE THIRD IDYLL OF THEOCRITUS

Translated from the Greek
by Andrew Lang

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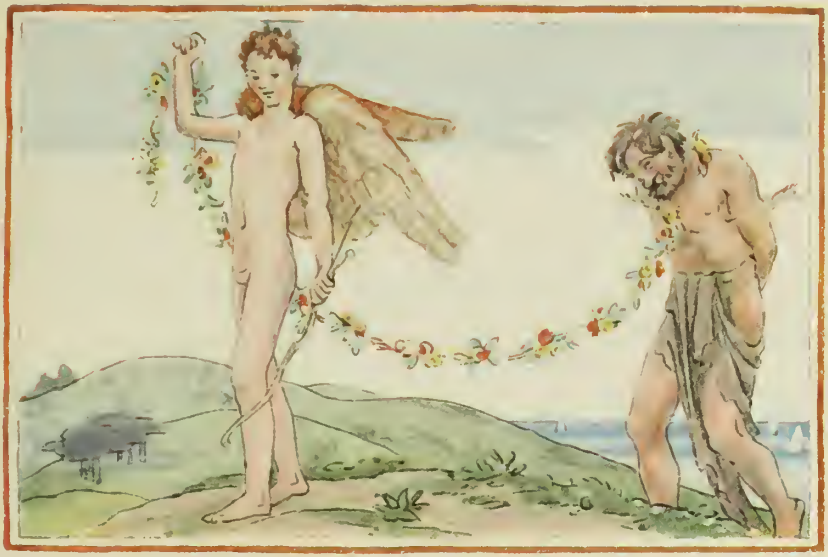
A Goatherd, leaving his goats to feed on the hillside, in the charge of Tityrus, approaches the cavern of Amaryllis, with its veil of ferns and ivy, and attempts to win back the heart of the girl by song. He mingles promises with harmless threats, and repeats, in exquisite verses, the names of the famous lovers of old days, Milanion and Endymion. Failing to move Amaryllis, the goatherd threatens to die where he has thrown himself down, beneath the trees.



THE THIRD IDYLL

COURTING Amaryllis with song I go, while my she-goats feed on the hill, and Tityrus herds them. Ah, Tityrus, my dearly beloved, feed thou the goats, and to the well-side lead them, Tityrus, and 'ware the yellow Libyan he-goat, lest he butt thee with his horns.

Ah, lovely Amaryllis, why no more, as of old, dost thou glance through this cavern after me, nor callest me, thy sweetheart, to thy side. Can it be that thou hatest me? Do I seem

snub-nosed, now thou hast seen me near, maiden, and under-hung? Thou wilt make me strangle myself!

Lo, ten apples I bring thee, plucked from that very place where thou didst bid me pluck them, and others to-morrow I will bring thee.

Ah, regard my heart's deep sorrow! ah, would I were that humming bee, and to thy cave might come dipping beneath the fern that hides thee, and the ivy leaves!

Now know I Love, and a cruel God is he. Surely he sucked the lioness's dug, and in the wild wood his mother reared him, whose fire is scorching me, and bites even to the bone.

Ah, lovely as thou art to look upon, ah heart of stone, ah dark browed maiden, embrace me, thy true goatherd, that I may kiss thee, and even in empty kisses there is a sweet delight!

Soon wilt thou make me rend the wreath in pieces small, the wreath of ivy, dear Amaryllis, that I keep for thee, with rosebuds twined, and fragrant parsley. Ah me, what anguish! Wretched that I am, whither shall I turn! Thou dost not hear my prayer!

I will cast off my coat of skins, and into yonder waves I will spring, where the fisher Olpis watches for the tunny shoals, and even if I die not, surely thy pleasure will have been done.

I learned the truth of old, when, amid thoughts of thee, I asked, 'Loves she, loves she not?' and the poppy petal clung not, and gave no crackling sound, but withered on my smooth forearm, even so.

And she too spoke sooth, even Agroeo, she that divineth with a sieve, and of late was binding sheaves behind the reapers, who said that I had set all my heart on thee, but that thou didst nothing regard me.

Truly I keep for thee the white goat with the twin kids that Mermnon's daughter too, the brown-skinned Erithacis, prays me to give her; and give her them I will, since thou dost flout me.

My right eyelid throbs, is it a sign that I am to see her? Here will I lean me against this pine tree, and sing, and then perchance she will regard me, for she is not all of adamant.

Lo, Hippomenes when he was eager to marry the famous maiden, took apples in his hand, and so accomplished his course: and Atalanta saw, and madly longed, and leaped into the deep waters of desire. Melampus too, the soothsayer, brought the herd of oxen from Othrys to Pylos, and thus in the arms of Bias was laid the lovely mother of wise Alphesiboea.

And was it not thus that Adonis, as he pastured his sheep upon the hills, led beautiful Cytherea to such heights of frenzy, that not even in his death doth she unclasp him from her bosom? Blessed, methinks, is the lot of him that sleeps, and tosses not, nor turns, even Endymion; and, dearest maiden, blessed I call Iason, whom such things befell, as ye that be profane shall never come to know.

My head aches, but thou carest not. I will sing no more, but dead will I lie where I fall, and here may the wolves devour me.

Sweet as honey in the mouth may my death be to thee.

375 *copies of this book were made at the Museum Press by*
Watson Kent, Bryson Burroughs and Bruce Rogers.

(IDYLL III)

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